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Page: 1

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Case Number: S200000044

PAGE 01 SANTIA 09590 01 OF 02 211240Z
ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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P 202102Z DEC 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1656

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPs

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(☒) Release (☐) Excise (☐) Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: (☐) In Part (☒) In Full

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Date Declassify on Reason

[REDACTED] SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 9590

E. O. 12065: GDS 12/20/78 (CLARE, DANIEL H). OR-P
TAGS: OR-P PINS, PORS, PINT, CI
SUBJECT: SANTIAGO BOMBINGS NOT SOLVED IN SPITE OF HERALDED ARRESTS

REF: SANTIAGO 9318

1. [REDACTED] SUMMARY: CHILEAN SECURITY SERVICES GAVE THE MISLEADING IMPRESSION THAT THEY HAD SOLVED A SERIES OF BOMBINGS (REFTEL) WHEN THEY ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 13 BREAKING UP A LEFTIST TERRORIST CELL. HOWEVER POLICE HAVE ONLY BEEN ABLE TO MAKE A CASE AGAINST ONE PERSON WHO CONFESSED TO HAVING PLACED ONE BOMB -- WHICH DID NOT EXPLODE. MOST OF THE EIGHT OTHER DETAINEES HAVE BEEN SET FREE OR CHARGED ONLY WITH DISTRIBUTING SUBVERSIVE PROPAGANDA. THE IDENTITIES OF THOSE PLACING THE VERY POWERFUL DEVICES AT THE HOUSE OF SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT BORQUEZ AND APPEALS JUDGE DUNLOP HAVE NOT BEEN DETERMINED. FORCEABLY RETIRED CARABINERO GENERAL CAMPOS OBVIOUSLY THINKS THAT THE SECURITY FORCES KNOW MORE THAN THEY ARE LETTING ON. WHILE NOT DISCARDING LEFTIST INVOLVEMENT, MANY LOCAL OBSERVERS SPECULATE THE RIGHTISTS, PERHAPS INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY SERVICES THEMSELVES, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY OF THE BOMBINGS. END SUMMARY.

2. [REDACTED] ON DECEMBER 13 SECURITY FORCES ANNOUNCED THE DETENTION OF SEVEN PEOPLE ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN PLACING A BOMB AT A SHELL OIL GAS STATION DECEMBER 5/6 -- THE DEVICE FAILED TO EXPLODE.

PAGE 02 SANTIA 09590 01 OF 02 211240Z

WE UNDERSTAND POLICE SUBSEQUENTLY ARRESTED TWO OTHERS AND ARE

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 1

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1978SANTIA09590

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 2
Channel: n/a

Case Number: S200000044

STILL LOOKING FOR A THIRD PERSON -- THOUGHT TO BE A SOCIOLOGIST WORKING AT THE SANTIAGO BRANCH OF FLASCO, JORGE MUNOZ. (FLASCO IS A SOCIAL RESEARCH ORGANIZATION BASED IN ARGENTINA WHOSE STUDIES ARE GENERALLY CRITICAL OF GOC POLICIES).

3. (U) THE DECEMBER 14 PRESS REPORTED THAT MARIA ELIANA RIVERA HAD SLIPPED PAST POLICE GUARDING THE VENEZUELAN EMBASSY BY DRESSING AS A NUN AND USING A FALSE IDENTITY CARD. SHE REMAINS IN THE EMBASSY WHILE THE GOV SEEKS FURTHER INFORMATION ON HER CASE. IT IS ASSUMED THAT SHE WAS INVOLVED WITH THE GROUP.

4. [REDACTED] INTERNAL NAME CHECKS SHOWED THAT ONE OF THE DETAINEES HAD SOUGHT ASYLUM IN THE MEXICAN EMBASSY RIGHT AFTER THE 1973 COUP. BUT APPARENTLY SHE WAS THE FIRST TO BE CLEARED OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE SHELL BOMBING; SHE WAS UNCONDITIONALLY RELEASED ON DECEMBER 14. A VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY LAWYER TELLS US THAT ONLY THE MAN WHO CONFESSED TO PLACING THE SHELLBOMB IS STILL BEING HELD UNDER MILITARY JURISDICTION FOR ARMS CONTROL VIOLATION (I.E., POSSESSION OF EXPLOSIVES). THE REST WERE CHARGED WITH NATIONAL SECURITY LAW VIOLATIONS FOR DISSEMINATING SUBVERSIVE LITERATURE AND CIVILIAN JUDGES RELEASED ALL BUT THREE FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE.

5. [REDACTED] STILL UNSOLVED THEN ARE THE NINE OTHER BOMBINGS WHICH TOOK PLACE IN LATE NOVEMBER AND EARLY DECEMBER, INCLUDING VERY POWERFUL EXPLOSIONS AT THE HOUSE OF SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT BORQUEZ (WHO IS HANDLING THE LETELIER EXTRADITION CASE) AND RESPECTED APPEALS COURT JUSTICE DUNLOP (WHO WAS INVESTIGATING THE BORQUEZ EXPLOSION). AND ANOTHER BOMB, THIS ONE LOW-TO-MEDIUM IN STRENGTH, DETONATED AT THE HOUSE OF A LOCAL BUSINESSMAN THE DAWN OF DECEMBER 15/16.

6. (U) SECURITY FORCES HAVE TAKEN GREAT PAINS TO POINT OUT THAT
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

PAGE 03 SANTIA 09590 01 OF 02 211240Z

THE DUD AT THE SHELL GAS STATION WAS COMPOSED OF DYNAMITE AUGMENTED BY READILY AVAILABLE CHEMICALS AND CNI SPOKESMEN HAVE DENIED EARLY ACCOUNTS THAT THE MUCH MORE POWERFUL EXPLOSIONS AT THE JUDGES' HOMES RESULTED FROM THE USE OF TROTYL -- A HIGHLY POTENT COMPONENT OF TNT. TROTYL IS SUPPOSED TO BE UNDER RIGOROUS MILITARY CONTROL AND CANNOT BE MANUFACTURED EASILY. CNI DISCLAIMERS NOTWITHSTANDING, THE DEVICES AT BORQUEZ' AND DUNLOP'S WERE OF A DIFFERENT ORDER OF MAGNITUDE.

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 2

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1978SANTIA09590

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 3

Channel: n/a

Case Number: S200000044

7. [REDACTED] THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR (OF WHICH CNI IS A SEMI-AUTONOMOUS PART) HAS REQUESTED THE MILITARY COURTS TO BEGIN INVESTIGATING THE BOMBINGS OF THE JUDGES (THE CIVIL COURTS ARE CONDUCTING THEIR OWN INVESTIGATION) ASSERTEDLY BECAUSE OF AN IPSO FACTO ARMS CONTROL INFRACTION. (COMMENT: A LESS CHARITABLE INTERPRETATION IS THAT THE GOC WOULD PREFER TO HAVE THE MILITARY COURTS DIRECTING THESE POTENTIALLY DELICATE INVESTIGATIONS).

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PAGE 01 SANTIA 09590 02 OF 02 211414Z
ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
ACDA-12 COME-00 SY-05 MCT-02 AID-05 /093 W
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P 202102Z DEC 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1657

[REDACTED] SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTIAGO 9590

8. [REDACTED] CLEARLY EX-SANTIAGO POLICE CHIEF GERMAN CAMPOS (WHO WAS OUSTED ON THE PRETEXT THAT HE HAD NOT PROVIDED PROTECTION FOR JUDGE BORQUEZ' HOUSE) IS NOT CONVINCED THAT MIR AMATEURS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THE INCIDENTS. ON DECEMBER 9 (BEFORE THE ARRESTS) HE TOLD THE PRESS: "THE SIMPLE, ELOQUENT FACT IS THAT THIS GROUP HAS NOT BEEN APPREHENDED AFTER OPERATING FOR TWO YEARS. THEY ARE HIGHLY TRAINED, WITH VAST TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE IN PLACING AND DETONATING EXPLOSIVES, HAVE ACCESS TO TROTYL, HAVE EXCELLENT LOGISTICAL SUPPORT AND MANY VEHICLES, AND APPARENTLY ARE NOT TRYING TO KILL. THEY HAVE EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD INTELLIGENCE AND SURVEILLANCE CAPABILITY... THEY HAVE BEEN OPERATING SINCE MAY, 1977." (COMMENT: THE MAY 1977 BOMBINGS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN IN LARGE MEASURE DINA WORK). "EL MERCURIO" DECEMBER 10 ALSO KEPT AN OPEN MIND ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF THE BOMBINGS, WHICH WERE THEN STILL "UNSOLVED". IT POINTED OUT THAT BOTH THE EXTREME LEFT AND EXTREME RIGHT SEEK TO ERODE THE IMAGE OF DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY.

9. [REDACTED] COMMENT: WHILE WE KNOW THAT MOVEMENT OF REVOLUTIONARY LEFT (MIR) SPLITTER GROUPS EXIST AND HAVE THE ABILITY OF MAKING AND SETTLING OFF BOMBS, THIS PARTICULAR SERIES OF ARRESTS DOES NOT

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 3

UNCLASSIFIED

Current Class: [REDACTED]
Current Handling: n/a
Document Number: 1978SANTIA09590

UNCLASSIFIED

Page: 4
Channel: n/a

Case Number: S200000044

SOLVE THE RECENT WAVE OF BOMBINGS. THERE WAS A SURPRISINGLY SHARP PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE GOC'S INABILITY TO PREVENT THESE BOMBINGS, AND SECURITY FORCES WERE UNDER GREAT PRESSURE TO FIND SOME LEFTIST TERRORISTS. THAT THEY DID PRODUCE SOME ARRESTS (AND PERHAPS DULLED PUBLIC AWARENESS THAT MOST OF THE CASES REMAINED

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PAGE 02 SANTIA 09590 02 OF 02 211414Z

OPEN) HAS NOT PREVENTED OTHERS FROM SPECULATING.

10. [REDACTED] EX-POLICE CHIEF CAMPOS UNDOUBTEDLY HAS AN AXE TO GRIND. NONETHELESS HE MUST HAVE HAD ACCESS TO INFORMATION SUPPORTING THE ALL BUT EXPLICIT IMPUTATION THE SECURITY SERVICES KNOW MORE THAN THEY ARE LETTING ON. THREE HYPOTHESES SPRING TO MIND: 1) THUGS STILL LOYAL TO MANUEL CONTRERAS WANTED TO INTIMIDATE THE COURTS AND OTHER GOC OFFICIALS LEST THEY THINK ABOUT PROSECUTING OR EXTRADITING THE EX-DINA CHIEF; 2) ROGUE MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY FORCES NEED TO KEEP THE TERRORIST THREAT ALIVE TO SAVE THEIR JOBS; OR 3) A VIGILANTE RIGHT -- PERHAPS INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY SERVICES -- WANTS TO SCARE THE GOVERNMENT INTO MAINTAINING OR STRENGTHENING THE CURRENT EMERGENCY MEASURES. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THE GOC ITSELF IS DIRECTLY CONNIVING WITH THE BOMBERS: IT HAS PLACED TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY TO TARNISH THAT IMAGE.

11. [REDACTED] IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT WHILE LEAVING THE PUBLIC IMPRESSION THAT QUICK WORK BY THE SECURITY SERVICES HAD SOLVED THE CASE, THE GOC HAS BEEN MODERATELY CAREFUL TO FOLLOW ITS OWN LAWS REGARDING DETENTION AND ARRAIGNMENT. WE NOTE ALSO THAT THE CIVIL COURTS HAVE BEEN WILLING TO FREE THOSE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED.

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Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 4

UNCLASSIFIED